



# Habitat Assessment Check-List for Soft Bottom Streams

*Directions:* Each parameter is listed in the column along the left-hand side, starting with riparian vegetation. Read each numbered category in the row to find the best match for your stream site. Circle the number in that category. Add up your scores for both left and right banks (or one total score) and enter total at left under parameter description. **Determine left or right bank by looking upstream (where water is coming from).**

Habitat Parameter	4	3	2	1
<p><b>1. Riparian Vegetation</b> Estimate width of riparian vegetation along each bank for entire 300 ft.</p> <p>Left Bank: _____</p> <p>Right Bank: _____</p> <p>Total Score: _____</p>	<p>Width of riparian vegetation is more than 50 feet; no evidence of human activities (e.g. parking lots, roadbeds, mowed areas, crops, clearcuts) within the zone.</p> <p>Left Bank: 4 Right Bank: 4</p>	<p>Width of riparian vegetation is 36-50 feet.</p> <p>Left Bank: 3 Right Bank: 3</p>	<p>Width of riparian vegetation is 20-35 feet.</p> <p>Left Bank: 2 Right Bank: 2</p>	<p>Width of riparian vegetation is less than 20 feet.</p> <p>Left Bank: 1 Right Bank: 1</p>
<p><b>2. Bank Vegetation</b> Estimate percentage of vegetation along each bank for entire 300 ft. marked area.</p> <p>Left Bank: _____</p> <p>Right Bank: _____</p> <p>Total Score: _____</p>	<p>More than 90% of the streambank surfaces covered by natural vegetation, including trees, shrubs, or other plants. No evidence of grazing or mowing; almost all plants allowed to grow naturally.</p> <p>Left Bank: 4 Right Bank: 4</p>	<p>Seventy to 90% of the streambank surfaces covered by natural vegetation; plant variety limited to one or two species. Slight vegetative disruption evident.</p> <p>Left Bank: 3 Right Bank: 3</p>	<p>Fifty to 69% of the streambank surfaces covered by vegetation. Patches of bare soil or closely cropped vegetation more common.</p> <p>Left Bank: 2 Right Bank: 2</p>	<p>Less than 50% of the streambank surfaces covered by vegetation; disruption of streambank vegetation is very common; vegetation has been cut to 2 inches or less; resembles a lawn.</p> <p>Left Bank: 1 Right Bank: 1</p>
<p><b>3. Bank Stability</b> Assess bank stability/erosion for entire 300 ft.</p> <p>Left Bank: _____</p> <p>Right Bank: _____</p> <p>Total Score: _____</p>	<p>Banks stable—no evidence of erosion or bank slumping (less than 5%).</p> <p>Left Bank: 4 Right Bank: 4</p>	<p>Moderately stable; infrequent, small areas of erosion mostly healed over with new vegetation evident.</p> <p>Left Bank: 3 Right Bank: 3</p>	<p>Moderately unstable; over half of banks in site have areas of erosion; high erosion potential during floods (no vegetation, steeply sloping banks)</p> <p>Left Bank: 2 Right Bank: 2</p>	<p>Unstable; many eroded areas; bare areas frequent along straight sections and bends; obvious bank collapse or failure; half to all of the bank has erosional scars.</p> <p>Left Bank: 1 Right Bank: 1</p>
<p><b>4. Channel Alteration</b> Estimate extent of channel modification for entire 300 ft. marked area.</p> <p>Total score: _____</p>	<p>Stream with normal or meandering pattern. No channelization, dredging or artificial structures (e.g., riprap).</p> <p>4</p>	<p>Some stream straightening, artificial embankments or dams are present, (usually in area of bridge abutments) no evidence of recent channel alteration activity.</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Artificial embankments present on both banks and more than half of stream site straightened, dredged or otherwise altered.</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Banks shored with gabion (a fortified embankment) or concrete; over 80% of the site straightened or disrupted.</p> <p>1</p>
<p><b>5. Channel Flow Status</b> Assess water level within stream channel for entire 300 ft.</p> <p>Total Score: _____</p>	<p>Water reaches base of both shorelines and a minimal amount of channel substrate is exposed.</p> <p>4</p>	<p>Water fills more than 75% of the channel; some channel substrate is exposed.</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Water fills about half of the channel and/or riffle substrates are mostly exposed. Water is shallow (less than 18 inches deep).</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Very little water in channel; banks blown out by excessive erosion and the normal flow does not reach the new shorelines.</p> <p>1</p>
<p><b>6. Channel Sinuosity</b> Assess how bends in the stream affect its length. Score entire 300 ft.</p> <p>Total Score: _____</p>	<p>The bends in the stream increase the stream length by three or four times if the channel were straightened out.</p> <p>4</p>	<p>The bends in the stream increase the stream length more than two to three times if the channel were straightened out.</p> <p>3</p>	<p>The bends in the stream increase the stream length one to two times if the channel were straightened out.</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Channel is straight; waterway has been straightened for a long distance.</p> <p>1</p>
<p><b>7. Sediment Deposition</b> Sediments are naturally deposited in slow-flow sections. High levels of deposition create an unstable, continually changing bottom. Score entire 300'.</p> <p>Total score: _____</p>	<p>Very little of bottom affected; minor accumulation of fine and coarse material at snags and submerged vegetation; little or no enlargement of islands or point bars.</p> <p>4</p>	<p>Less than half of the bottom affected; moderate accumulation; substantial sediment movement only during major storm event; some new increase in bar formation.</p> <p>3</p>	<p>More than half of bottom affected with major deposits; pools shallow, heavily silted; large deposits may be present on both banks; sediment deposits are an obstruction to the water flow.</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Heavy deposits of fine material. Increased bar development. More than 50% of the bottom changing frequently. Pools almost absent due to substantial sediment deposition.</p> <p>1 (flip over)</p>

